The Semaphore

A PUBLICATION OF TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

"Telegraph Hill from Lombard Street" by Helen Ludwig, 1962

ISSUE 154 **WINTER 2000-1**

TELEGRAPH HILL DWELLERS

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Cover: "Telegraph Hill from Lombard Street" by Helen Ludwig, 1962. Eighty-nine-year-old Helen's most recent exhibit of paintings and ceramics was at City Hall in November.

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The Semaphore is a publication of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers for its members. Articles, except for the summary of Board of Directors' Motions, do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Association or its Officers, but are the opinions of the writers of the individual signed articles. The Association can take no responsibility for their content. This membership publication is not to be reprinted or disseminated without written permission.

Beautification Committee Report

Jan Holloway, Chair

We are delighted to report of the Beautification Committee's selection of two North Beach businesses as recipients for special awards, which we presented at our general membership meeting on October 23rd.

Josephine and George Soracco, owners of **Liguria Bakery**, at 1700 Stockton Street, at the corner of Filbert Street, were recognized with the *Heritage of the Hill Award*, heralding the value to the neighborhood of this long-time, family-run business. Liguria Bakery has been in continuous operation by the Soracco family since around 1911, when George Soracco's father and brothers built it after the earthquake and fire. George has been working there long hours since the late 1930s. His wife, Josephine, also a North Beach native, works there along with George and their son and daughter-in-law. Hungry focaccia lovers flock to their wonderful bakery from all over the Bay Area. They use no preservatives, they bake fresh every day, and as many of you know, when they sell out, they close! Congratulations to the proprietors of this fine old establishment! We wish the Soraccos many more years of success.

Babette and Steven Pinsky received the *Architectural Preservationist Award* for their excellent achievement in the remodeling project at 1400 Grant Avenue, at the corner of Green Street. Formerly the site of North Beach Leather, this corner location now houses the Pinskys' women's specialty apparel collection called **Babette's**. The storefront was greatly improved by restoration work done with a sensitive eye toward recapturing the character of the original building. Retaining the original windows and applying harmonious colors and new tiles, the now airy indoor space retains the historic look and feel of the other, older classic storefronts along Grant Avenue. Welcome to our new neighbors! We wish them continued success in this new location.

Sadly, we must mention the passing away on August 13 of **Frances Sanchez,** known to all as the beloved "Mama," of her restaurant, **Mama's**, at 1701 Stockton Street, across the street from Liguria Bakery. Mama's has been a valuable part of North Beach for nearly 50 years. Mama Sanchez's contributions extended far beyond the restaurant empire which she and her husband maintained. At one time this "chain" included 11 locations, to which celebrities the likes of Julia Child, James Beard and Luciano Pavarotti made frequent pilgrimages. Her original restaurant will continue on under the ownership of her son, Michael, and daughter-in-law, Becky, in exactly the same way that Mama would have—with lots of fresh ingredients and a home-made style. At our next general meeting, an award of *Special Thanks and Recognition* to Mama Sanchez will be presented to her family for her contributions to all San Franciscans.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

By Aaron Peskin

We look around our neighborhood and see what those who came before us saw: a place so beautiful, so full of potential, so full of energy and spirit. Nearly every visitor to our City sees this and envies us, those fortunate enough to call our part of San Francisco home. But it's not just the postcard picture of San Francisco that's so magnificent. Over the last few months, talking to shopkeepers in Chinatown, to parents as they watch their children play at Michaelangelo Park or Washington Square, and to people in our North Beach coffee houses and cafes, I've felt that energy and spirit, that potential, in a personal way. And in walking the streets and steep hills of our corner of the City, I've fallen in love yet again with our architecture, our shared history, and our way of life.

This picture comes alive with the people who live in our neighborhood, for without them, we would only have a pretty postcard. For the last two years we've been recording the stories of long-time members of our community. I've been delighted to see the fruits of the Telegraph Hill Dwellers' Oral History Project as stories and shared histories have been carefully and painstakingly recorded. THD board member Audrey Tomaselli has done an outstanding job spearheading this effort and has now interviewed eleven people and completed eight oral histories. Living legends like Dante Benedetti, Peter Macchiarini and Joe Jacceta have generously shared their reminiscences and stories. Audrey has been assisted by many other Hill Dwellers, including photographers Jenny Montgomery and Mikkel Aaland, transcribers Judi Katz and Bob MacMillan, and Peter Overmire, who has provided technical assistance. The stories are moving and joyous and evoke the sense of place that we share here. Each interview and accompanying photos are bound together and can be read at the North Beach Branch of the Public Library or can be checked out from Audrey. Copies have also been donated to the Bancroft Regional Oral History Archives at UC Berkeley. Each of you is invited to borrow them and to learn, from the energy and spirit of their stories, more about the part of San Francisco we call our home.

Aaron Peskin

photo by Jason Doiy

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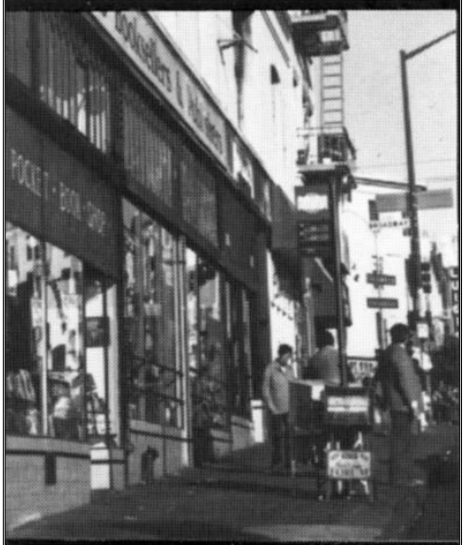

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PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT

By Nancy Shanahan

I. THE TELEGRAPH HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT

(In 1986, the Board of Supervisors established this historic district on the east side of Telegraph Hill to preserve the largest group of pre-1870 structures in the City.)

Grace Marchant Garden/Alta Street Development (20-30 Alta) The developers presented a new project proposal representing a substantial reduction in size, and offered to grant a conservation easement that would limit the size of the development and protect in perpetuity the Grace Marchant Garden and the public's access to it. THD's appeal of the EIR to the Board of Supervisors is still pending as negotiations with the developer continue. Stay tuned. For the Board Resolution regarding this matter, see page 24 of *The Semaphore*.

290 Union The developer made significant changes to this project which impact adjacent neighbors and are inconsistent with agreements made with neighbors at the time the plans were approved. Although the City previously shut down the project for such noncompliance, it has allowed the project to proceed on certain portions of the structure (even though the developer refuses to cooperative with adjoining residents).

II. NORTH BEACH NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

(In 1987, the Board of Supervisors adopted the North Beach Neighborhood Commercial District (NBNCD) Ordinance to maintain the character of, and mix of businesses in North Beach.)

1351 Grant Avenue (formerly, Figoni Hardware) Because the building owners are proceeding with an Ellis Act eviction of all 21 residents in the upper stories of the building, the Planning Commission is considering the revocation of a previously approved Conditional Use Permit for bar/restaurant use, a condition of which provides that the building's tenants not be negatively impacted. The State Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control has not issued a liquor license.

580 Green Street at Stockton (Citibank) This building, formerly the site of Bayview Bank, has been leased to Citibank. While new banks are prohibited within this area of the Neighborhood Commercial District, bank use is allowed in this building since it was "grandfathered" by the prior bank use. After discussions and negotiations, Citibank has agreed to moderate its signage for the building — initially proposed to be a large illuminated bright blue band wrapping around both the Green and Stockton Street facades.

504 Columbus Avenue (Pacific Bell PCS Store) Without a sign permit, Pacific Bell installed a large illuminated corporate brand sign on the Columbus Avenue elevation, together with awnings on both the Columbus and Stockton Street elevations. The Building Department issued a Notice of Violation and THD has been working with Pac Bell to reduce or eliminate the inappropriate signage. THD is exploring whether the use of this new corporate store is legal in our Neighborhood Commercial District.

continued next page

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMITTEE REPORT *contin ued*

III. THE WATERFRONT

The Round House/Embarcadero at Sansome and Lombard (City Landmark #114).
P & Z has been working with the Port and its new lessee to minimize the impacts of adding mechanical equipment to the roof of this landmark since the roof is one of the important historical features of this building. Even though it is a designated City Landmark, the Port refuses to have the project reviewed by the Landmarks Board. THD is challenging this.

Piers 27-29 The Port has issued an RFP for the development of a major sports and recreation complex at these piers.

Pier 45, Shed A The Port Commission has approved a developer's proposed theme park about San Francisco history geared to tourists ("San Francisco at the Wharf") instead of a bay-oriented education center ("The Bay Center") proposed by a coalition of wharf businesses, environmental groups and the State Coastal Conservancy.

Affordable Housing Project (at Broadway and Battery) THD is attending a series of meetings being held to consider the design and other elements of this Chinatown Community Development Corporation (CCDC) project which is located in the Northeast Waterfront Historic District. For more information please contact THD Board Member Brendan Kelly at 713-4546.

IV. JACKSON SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT

(The Board of Supervisors established this—the City's first—historic district in 1972. The district is also listed on the National Register of Historic Places.)

700 Montgomery (Law Offices of Angela Alioto). Through the efforts of Angela Alioto, this building is now an official City Landmark (it is also a contributor to the Jackson Square Historic District). Alioto's pursuit of this designation was to ward off a rumored proposal to demolish this historic 1905 building and replace it with a 14-story office tower.

722-724 and 726-728 Montgomery Street (the Belli Building) It is our understanding that a preservation architect retained by owner and Landmarks Board Member Nancy Ho-Belli has figured out a way to retain the floor systems and structural components of these two 1850s Landmark buildings (City Landmark Nos. 9 and 10). Unfortunately, nothing seems to be happening and there is still no roof to protect this structure from the rain.

845 Montgomery Street (formerly, Ernie's Restaurant) This proposal to renovate and seismically upgrade these two historic buildings would add a two-story penthouse, punch in 17 new windows into the original walls, alter the storefronts and change the use of the building to offices. We were disturbed that the City's Environmental Review Office/ Planning Department determined that the project was exempt from all environmental review because the Department considers this project to be a "minor alteration".

III. MISCELLANEOUS RESIDENTIAL PROJECTS

Bill Bailey Cottage (115 Telegraph Hill and 361-377 Filbert) No news to report on the return of the Bill Bailey Cottage to a site on school property (between Telegraph Hill Blvd. and the school building). The site on the Filbert

P AND Z COMMITTEE REPORT *contin ued*

Steps from which the Cottage was moved (and where three other buildings were demolished over a year ago) is still vacant.

North Beach Public Housing Development (bounded by Columbus, Bay, Mason and Francisco Streets) This project of HUD, the SF Housing Authority and BRIDGE Housing Corp. to demolish the existing structures and replace them with 360 townhouses seems to have stalled over the need for additional funding.

310 Green Street The Little House Committee and nearby neighbors appealed this project (which includes the demolition of an existing small house and its replacement by a large single-family structure) to the Board of Appeals. The Board upheld the developer's project approvals.

We Remember Mary O'Gara

Longtime Hill Dweller Mary O'Gara died in October, after a long illness. The former publicist and journalist will be remembered for her feisty fight to preserve the character of her beloved hill. She is survived by eleven nieces and nephews.

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Say, Who's in Charge of *The Semaphore*?

By Patricia Cady

Part 2: Acknowledging past Semaphore editors whose news has become the history of Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

North Beach in the 1960s was a "scene, man." Tour buses out for beatnik sightings were stuck at tight turns on Telegraph Hill, while the artists and poets who made the neighborhood famous walked home. When Ken Evers (editor 1966-74) took over THD's newsletter, still called the *Bulletin*, he had a reputation for sticking with important jobs—inspecting constructions for compliance with the hard-won 40-foot height limit, and spearheading an underground wiring plan to replace a forest of telephone poles. On THD's board at the same time was Freida Klussman who would save San Francisco's cable cars a decade hence. She chaired a tree planting committee which included Jack Early, who went on to plant a hillside park named for him in 1987. Ken had a gift for description, calling the constant threat of an encircling freeway a "many-headed Hydra," and for prophecy, when he bannered this word across the top of a 1968 *Bulletin*: EMERGENCY!

The emergency was created by new mayor Joe Alioto who told developers not to feel "restricted" by height limits along the waterfront, a death knell to views and property values for neighborhoods adjacent to the bay. Planning controls went out the window. A building 84 feet high and 6 blocks wide was proposed at the base of Telegraph Hill, permanently blocking east access to Montgomery, Lombard, Greenwich and Filbert Streets. Funiculars were suggested to carry stranded residents up the Greenwich and Filbert steps. Traffic bottlenecks on the Embarcadero would be solved by—what else?—a freeway. Even its architects called the unfortunate design a "crate". Bob Katz, a THD founder with his wife Nancy, led (according to Ken's report) "massive numbers" of Dwellers to the Planning Commission where Katz demanded a moratorium until impact studies were completed, giving the developers a chance to forget the whole thing and slink out of town before they were run out. Ken Evers' publicity started a citywide organization called Protect Our Waterfront, whose activists are now sadly missed as San Francisco's Port Commission is given a free hand in marketing the bayfront to developers for massive construction with "view corridors" to gradually replace the famous backdrop of what was one of the world's great maritime towns.

Enter Bob Tibbitts who edited *The Semaphore* (1975-76) during his first of two stints as THD President. Ken Evers had renamed the quarterly in 1967, adding a logo featuring the #39 bus to mark an early THD victory—saving public transportation on the Hill, despite the City's decision to scrap it. Tibbitts and Waterfront Chair, Bob Katz, worked together to defeat projects on Port property more massive than the crate, including a 550-foot office tower south of the Ferry Building. And finally, though it took years, they shut down an illegal sightseeing operation which had noisy helicopters buzzing homes and angry residents quoting Shakespeare, "Chaos is come again!"

During Bob's watch, Nancy Katz, chair of the Parking and Traffic Committee, came up with a paean to ease local parking. After her surveys proved more than half the parking spaces on the Hill were occupied weekdays by commuters, she proposed sticker-ID Residential Permit Parking. The now national idea started right here, with stickers appropriately designated "A". Other satisfying news was the beautification of a dead-end block of Vallejo Street between Montgomery and Kearny. Future THD President Rod Freebairn-Smith converted a concrete slab street into a land-

scaped garden—go take a look.

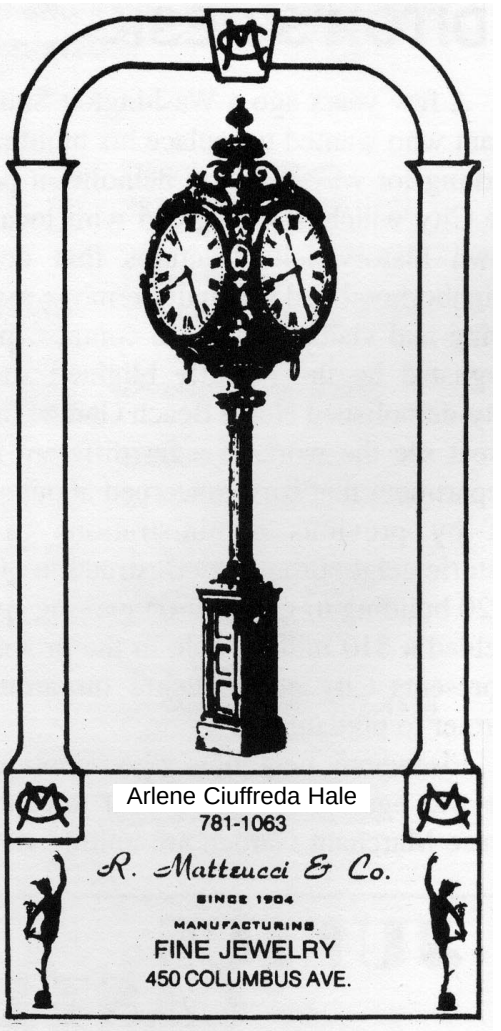
John Holmes (editor, 1977-78) added this postscript to reader/members in the only issue he edited which I could find: "For those of you who like to prolong meetings verbosely, a friendly reminder that brevity is the soul of wit." He was succeeded by Margaret Gwathmey *(*editor, 1979-80*)*, who had a knack for delegating work. "I never wrote or drew a thing," she said, "because of the immense writing and artistic talent of members." At a time of local economic recession, Margaret's crew reported THD's strong opposition to closing down the North Beach Library, and they described a declining street scene: The last pharmacy in North Beach at Union and Stockton was forced out of business by the same untenable rent increases that closed many other businesses leaving buildings vacant, including the old Italian Village market at Green and Columbus where the butcher always tucked fresh rosemary in with your chicken.

Lynne Burwell *(*editor 1981-84*)* edited *(*with Perci Chester, Anne Halsted and David Myrick*)* a handsome publication to mark the 25th anniversary of Telegraph Hill Dwellers and the opening of a 100-year time capsule placed in Washington Square near the statue of Benjamin Franklin. The capsule contained, said a disappointed observer, "mostly religious tracts advocating abstinence." Lynn recalls Herb Kosovitz and John Dolan as her particularly good writers and describes membership meetings in those days (often held at long-gone Basque restaurants) as "street theatre", hearing one irate member tell another, "Oh, shut up!" The recession was getting to people.

Kathleen Cannon (editor 1985-86) recalls Lynn Burwell as "a one-woman editor/computerized typesetter," who turned a flyer into a magazine. That was the year THD led a citywide effort to stop a major expansion project in the Grace Marchant Garden on the Filbert Steps. More than 4,000 people donated over $200,000 to purchase property slated for redevelopment, then resold it with a guarantee against future encroachment.

The Garden, our bayfront and views, the wish for a quiet home in a noisy city are values shared for close to fifty years by Telegraph Hill Dwellers who have been willing and able to defend them.

In the next installment: The Embarcadero Freeway finally comes down. THD plants 400 trees and begins the Pioneer Park Project to rehabilitate the green space surrounding Coit Tower.



THIS AND THAT...Cruisin' the THD "Hood"

with Sheila Black

A New Year is a-coming, and it won't be too soon for THDer **Suzanne Nelson**. Humor has supported her through dramatic health problems (of the major surgery/chemotherapy ilk) that began in January....after she was laid off from her job. Then, a few weeks ago, as she trotted down Union Street from her tiny nest on upper Alta, a wet PG&E cover plate seemingly turned to ice underfoot and caused a fall that shattered her ankle. More surgery. Not to mention, the anxiety that wells up from a random strike at one's independence. For the moment Suzanne gets around in a wheelchair, which is definitely not this charged-up lady's style. However, she has decided to make lemonade,as they say, and consider this series of negative events a positive sign from the universe that she needs to slow down and focus on the meaningful things in her life. Isn't it amazing how tragedy sometimes can be a blessing? If you choose to share thoughts of hope with her, it will undoubtedly help make this into a real season of joy for both of you. Telephone 986-6210 and expect to be welcomed by a cheery voice, and remember....down is only one step away from up.

And, ZOWIE! Speaking of New Year's celebrations (we were, weren't we?), several THDers (you have to guess) were startled to spy each other eyeball to masked eyeball, or sporting horns, tattooed breasts, and somber cloaks at the **WITCHES NEW YEAR** Spiral Dance 2000 (both the year and the number of attendees) held a few weeks back at Ft. Mason. A wild and wooly gathering of spirits and S.F. characters, it was...they, frequently tilting on stilts or clinging to ropes strung from the rafters...with alters depicting the four basic elements of the earth that can and should be honored, always, defiled never...on pain of, well...evil Fairies and darkness. Sort of a Teatro ZinZanni with bats and an underlying message of renewal and rebirth dressed gaudily in black and orange. You had to be there.

Moose's and the BBC hot-shotters had nothing on **Cobalt** during the newly-historic district election night hysteria, by the way. Either location was the place to be, depending on your perspective and whether you could get in. Those 100-200 (who could count with all those screaming, scrunched bodies) at Cobalt were treated to music (if they could hear over the din) and food and the glorious company of each other, all wanting the same particular victory (think black beard, glasses, short stature/tall integrity...there was only one of those running).

Talk of politicians immediately prompts thoughts of the Irish Mayor of North Beach, **Myles O'Reilly**...he of the flaming hair and symbolic canine companion. No sooner than he had co-invented and hosted a rip-roaring theatrical event celebrating the 100th anniversary of the demise of the great writer, wit, and poet, Oscar

continued on page 16

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On the Beat

By Officer James Gratz

Sometimes it's all about being in the right place at the right time.

For all the modern advances, the investigative techniques, the DNA testing, it seems like good police work can be 90 percent luck and 10 percent intuition.

Case #000991829. August 22. 9:45 a. m.

Today was warm and a little cloudy, nice weather. A perfect day to rob a bank.

Romero peered at his reflection in the window and saw the throngs of people hustling up Grant Avenue behind him. Chinatown is always busy these days, makes it easy for a quick getaway. "Two steps out the door and I'll blend in and be gone," he grinned.

Now, most people would be nervous, even a little scared before pulling a hold-up, but not Romero. He was perfectly calm. After all, he had robbed 16 banks in the past five months without a hitch. If anyone tried to stop him today, he had a black handgun tucked into his waistband. Not that he was afraid of being caught. He had already spent 13 years in the penitentiary for robbery. But he wouldn't get caught. He had planned this robbery too carefully. He turned his body into the alcove and placed a surgical mask over his face. He put on a baseball cap, the kind with long, fake hair hanging down from the rim. He pulled the gloves on and entered the bank.

This was gonna be easy.

Except for one thing. He hadn't counted on Officer Keith Singer, SFPD, star 1345.

Singer was working as a plain-clothes detail, had been for months. His assignment? Catch this thug who had been victimizing the citizens and robbing the banks. Keith had been staking out small banks for the last month, but it had been an exercise in futility. The gunman was hitting right under his nose, but by the time the police were called, the bad guy was long gone. The suspect was always described as "long hair, hooded jacket, wearing a mask and baseball cap."

On this Tuesday, Keith was going to start fresh, conducting a canvas of smaller banks in Chinatown. He just had this feeling . . . this guy was due to hit.

As Keith approached a bank on Grant, he stopped in his tracks. Jackpot! He was watching as Romero changed into his disguise!

Fearing a shootout in the crowded street, Singer allowed Romero to enter the bank unhindered. When Romero came out, he had $700 of the bank's money.

He also had a welcoming committee. Singer had called for backup. Romero was taken into custody without a shot being fired. He didn't have a chance to pull his gun.

Money recovered, 17 cases solved, a very bad man behind bars.

Office Singer had earned his doughnut.

At least that's the way I see it from down here. "On the Beat."

Our graffiti artists from the last issue? They were each sentenced to 80 hours community service. They spend it painting out graffiti at police direction in Chinatown.

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Bunny Hop

By Helen von Ammon

For twenty-seven years, I lived on Telegraph Hill in a building I loved, hidden on a street which cab drivers, Super Shuttles, and visitors could seldom find—sometimes a mixed blessing.

Not proficient at combat, I'd rather run than fight. I solved an untenable situation by selling the building. Bought me a nice condo.

On my new street, cable cars clang individual trademarks. Mercifully, they desist these trick tunes at bedtime.

Moving is never simple. For a parent to two enchanting pedigreed, English angora bunnies, the problem exacerbates two-fold. Some buildings consider all pets anathema; none are allowed. My bid, which was the highest received, for a co-op that fit my needs perfectly, was rejected because of two caged rabbits. Together, NaKoo and Schatze weigh seven pounds. Discouraged, I thought of a hassenpheffer recipe. Just kiddin'!

NaKoo (Eskimo for "nice"), Schatze, and I are happily settled now. At play in the new location, Schatze has perfected a Flying Walenski trick, or maybe she is a reincarnation from the famous circus family.

Recently I looked for her. Under the frig? Inside a cupboard? NaKoo, gentleman that he is, offered to help.

We finally found Schatze sitting coyly on the window sill. Fortunately, the window was closed.

The next day I found her on a shelf, curled comfortably inside an antique crystal bowl.

Both locations are two feet above the top of the cage.

It's hard to be stern with anything as endearing as beautiful bunnies. I moved the cages out of reach even for a gazelle.

House Rabbit. Perfect Pet. Just ask me.

Fog Hill Market

Hanna Chedyak

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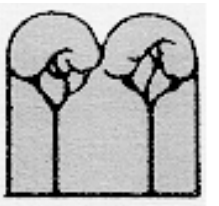

THIS AND THAT...Cruisin' the THD "Hood" *continued from p. 12*

Wilde, than he started conjuring up menus and early festivities for the Christmas season. The first was a celebration on December 8th of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Believers and non-believers alike still appreciate magical events, especially when enhanced by pungent winter garlands, hung with care, and the possibility of Leprechauns in the house. Such opportunities will be available through the month with corporate parties and home boys and girls, all welcome. By reservation, of course. And where else, darlin,' will you find the goose stuffed with Irish sausage, as you chomp contentedly to the sweet trill of traditional Irish music, gorging your senses in the pure joy of feasting? Then, at month's end, O'Reilly's guarantees a "civilized" Irish New Year's celebration. Now that will be something different around this neck of the woods, Guinness or otherwise....a 'ting nothing short of a miracle, indeed.

In case you missed it in the *Examiner*, as I did, **Brendan Kelly** (serving as THD's representative on the committee to design the Broadway/ Battery project) and his fiancée, **Kerry Morgan**, have combined their collective architectural/ preservation talents to build a house in Lake Tahoe for Brendan's parents....using salvaged stone from the City Hall renovation and "repatriating it to the Sierra Mountains." Lovely thought. Lovely deed.

And, finally, former Telegraph Hill Dwellers, **Stacy Shember** and **Leo McLaughlin**, have a new view together (literally and figuratively)...the physical view is that of the Hudson River in New York from their newly-decorated double penthouse condo...the romantic one is their life together as a married couple, and that will start on May 27th, with several THDers in attendance. Which leads me to the idea that all one needs in this life is: something to do, someone to love, and something to look forward to. Happy Holidays!

Bulletin Board

Want to start a book club? Find a neighbor who shares a special interest? We invite you to use our Bulletin Board for any non-commercial neighborhood messages.

The Semaphore needs a few good men and women to do small line drawings on neighborhood subjects for space fillers. Please call 392-4081 or e-mail cheryl@slip.net.

sem.a.phore

Definition: To convey information using visual signals, such as flags, lights and mechanical arms.

In the last century, Telegraph Hill was a lookout spot. A man stood at the top and watched for ships arriving through the Golden Gate. He used semaphore signals to spell out ships' names to the people below who were waiting for goods and mail. Neighbors who formed Telegraph Hill Dwellers in 1954 named their newsletter to salute this early use of the Hill.

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Is this your
last Semaphore?

If the mailing label is dated Dec. 1, 2000 or earlier, your membership has lapsed and we hope you'll rectify that situation with a check. If you think our records are incorrect or you are in doubt about your membership status, please contact Membership Chair, Rozell Overmire, phone 989-3945. E-mail rozell@overmire.com.

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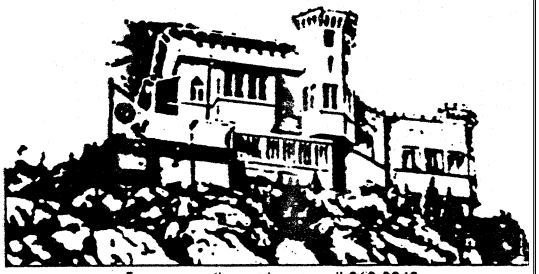


For reservations please call 362-3042

The Shrink Is In

by Sheila Tobin Black, Ph.D.

When is the last time you really listened to someone, or really felt heard? We misinterpret others' communication with unseeing eyes wide open, with ears that hear words, but not the real message. We miscommunicate in shouts and whispers and silence, in the office and in the bedroom, assuming what we think we intend to say is coming across that way. Think again.

At least every couple of sessions, I tell a client that I understood the words I heard, but didn't know what they meant to him/her. Both of us can find out because I bother to ask and my client is given, and takes, time to rethink what was said versus what is meant. It's not easy to communicate successfully. A lot is involved. For starters, there is intention (how understood you really want to be); there is a responsibility to make your message clear; there is honesty with yourself and trust that you'll be okay if your message backfires . . . big stuff, sometimes scary. I am reminded of a line from Atlantic Monthly a zillion years ago that said, "The chimpanzee grin of fear twitches at the edge of every human smile."

There are huge cross-cultural differences in styles of communication that can be misleading. I don't mean just ethnic backgrounds, though they play an obvious role; I mean differences in the way men and women approach communication. There is often a gender collision in dialogue. Men and women have trouble examining, identifying and expressing needs to be heard by the opposite sex because each is reared differently from early in life.

Although perhaps with more subtlety than in Victorian days, men are still taught to act; women are still taught to accommodate. That makes for difficulty in hearing and being sensitive to each other, even in plain everyday expectations of what needs to be done, when, and from whose point of view. "You could have helped," she said. "Helped what?" he replied, genuinely puzzled. They were in the same room, but different worlds. "Don't ask; don't tell" doesn't cut it here.

As a rule, it is easier for men to help by doing, to give something material like physical care that requires concrete activity, but doesn't require listening to painful feelings. When faced with those, in trying to ward them off in themselves, men may react with impatience and anger. On the other hand, a woman wants to talk about her emotional needs and perceptions, and wants her man to listen. When she says, "we have to talk," she is looking for connection. When he hears, "we have to talk," he is expecting a problem, a criticism, or a debate and wants to disappear.

Following are a few basic guidelines to consider:

1. If what you hear is at all unclear to you, don't assume anything. Get it clarified.

2. Try not to talk at cross-purposes. There is huge emotional difference between rapport talk and report talk. "They're just words" is a lie.

3. Listen to what is not being said, as well as what is being said. Silence may be golden at the right time and place, but it's never meaningless.

4. Body language says a lot (arms crossed over chest, poor eye contact, blank eyes,

clenched fists, sitting on edge of chair and leaning forward, blushing, fidgeting, backing up an inch or two...on and on). All mental phenomena have a physical component.

5. Unless you're dealing with someone's death-inducing monologue, try to be fully present and not interrupt.

Finally, it never hurts to remember Rudyard Kipling's timeless suggestion:

"I had six honest serving men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names were What and Why and When
and How and Where and Who."

(Dr. Black is a Clinical Psychologist and Professional Geriatric Care Manager in private practice in San Francisco. She welcomes questions, comments, and clients of all adult ages seeking tools for personal change. Call her at 415-398-8969.)

Historical Files Are Created

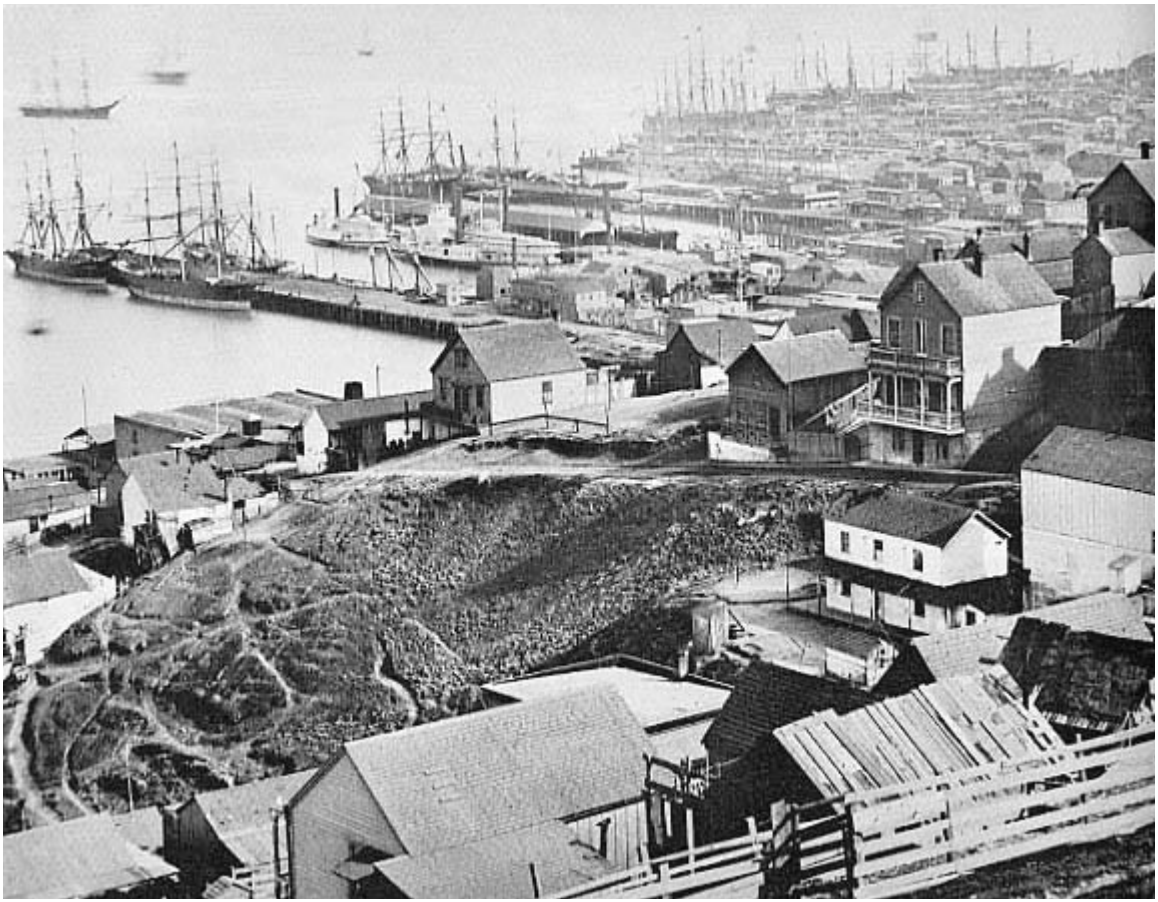
THD's Historian Emeritus Extraordinaire Rhoda Robinson has combed through old *Semaphores* and set up files on individuals containing information gleaned from the *Semaphores*. Rhoda's efforts give us a kind of database on people who were formerly active in THD. Rhoda's latest project is only one in a long list of her attempts to ensure that THD's history is complete.

Tea Party Busted on Telegraph Hill

By Steve Thomas

If the walls of one of San Francisco's oldest residences could talk, they would probably talk loudest of the night in February 1927 when the police arrived at 2 a.m. to shut down an all night "tea" party at 31 Alta.

Today, the Greek revival railings of the home's double-decker balconies sag quaintly in front of the 150-year old Grand Dame and hang out over Alta Street and the brick first floor like Old Quarter iron balconies of Bourbon Street. The top floors are white common clapboard, and back in 1852, when Captain Richard Andrews built his home, the living room was located on the second floor, the family bedrooms were on the third floor and the maid's quarters were in the attic. Kitchen design considerations in the 1850s appeared to revolve mainly around keeping the house from burning down, and as was common, the cooking area and dining room were located as far from combustible clapboard as



An early view of 31 Alta (with balcony) from *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill.*
Reprinted by permission of David Myrick

possible, in this case, in the brick semi-basement.

The most infamous inhabitant of 31 Alta throughout the last century was a reputed Russian noble, Myrtokleia Sawvelle who, according to David Myrick's *San Francisco's Telegraph Hill*, converted the brick dining room and kitchen into a "night club." Myrick reports that printed cards were sent to a prospective clientele announcing her Telegraph Hill Tavern as having "all the atmosphere of the Montmarte with a Marine view."

Apparently the views from the double balcony were even more striking than they are today. A photograph taken during the 1850s shows the broad, open view from Alta street before it was paved in the 1930s. Today that view is partially blocked by all the rest of the buildings now occupying the north side of Alta: modern architecture's answer to straightforward utility. According to Myrick, Myrtolkleia (who came to be known as Myrtle) served tea at two in the afternoon, followed by dinner at six and supper after ten; while a Sunday morning brunch was offered from eleven to two.

On that eventful night in February 1927, Myrtle's guests must have been carousing on the balconies, howling at the moon just as the yuppies are want to do nowadays at 2 a.m. on Columbus Avenue. However, on that night on Telegraph Hill the neighbors were having none of it. The constabulary were called, and the Black Maria arrived to escort Myrtle and her party to the city jail for the rest of early morning.

Myrtle not only had considerable skill in the culinary arts and the charm to be a gracious hostess, but she was also a pro at public relations. While the press headlined the story "Wild 'Tea Party' Raided", her account painted for the reporters a not unusual evening of tea and art appreciation. Apparently, Myrtle was giving a private exhibition of a new work of art by Elwood Decker described as "an esoteric blue damsel charging through a red fog."

"We were sitting around admiring Elwood Decker's new painting," relates Myrtle Sawvelle's account in the press. "We weren't even drinking anything but tea and I was making a pan full of biscuits for a little supper when the police came and made us all get in that black wagon.

"Some of the guests who arrived late were making quite a bit of noise but we didn't realize that this was disturbing anybody," she said. "We are going to start all over again with a tea room and this time there will be no nights in jail."

According to Myrick, it was not to be. Her food was exotic, her liquor was good — but her timing was poor because her teas were taking place during Prohibition. Her homemade brews landed her in jail again for 90 days, and she was promptly appointed jailhouse cook. Tackling her new job with gusto, Myrtle became the heroine of her fellow inmates. Her fellow prisoners never ate so well, in or out of jail, and it was a sad day when she was liberated. A year later, Myrtokleia retired to Carmel.

Cyber Cops

In October, Web Master Peter Overmire softened THD's rule of limiting e-mail to notification of social events and meetings. With a rash of burglaries in the Filbert Steps area, Peter, with the okay of the Executive Committee, e-mailed members information on the latest burglaries and sightings. According to Peter, he had about 60 positive comments and only two negatives ones regarding this new use of THD e-mail. Most members appreciated the speedy alerts.

A suspect—whose description was known to e-mail participants before his actual arrest—was apprehended.

Thanks go to Captain Dillon at Central Station for his help.

Marie Harrington Remembers Life in Old North Beach

By Art Peterson

Marie Harrington has lived at 1714 Grant for the last 75 years, and she isn't planning on moving any time soon.

Marie's mother, a De Martini from the town of Lursica, Italy—where most everyone is named De Martini—joined her family in San Francisco in 1910. Marie was born in 1924.

Marie, c. 1930, Green Street (corner of Grant) looking uphill.

It's no surprise that over the years, Marie has watched changes in North Beach, but she stays on because of what hasn't changed. She thinks of North Beach as a community, a place where people stop and chat. In that way, she says, it's not like other places.

"I don't think there's any other area where everyone says hello whether you know them or not. Everyone smiles."

In the days when Marie was growing up, her sense of community must have been easier to come by. "In those days, North Beach was around 60% immigrant. Everyone spoke Italian, and all the families were large. On Sunday morning we all went to church, and everyone went into Soracco's to get 10-cent focaccia and that was our breakfast. On Grant and Green where we lived, when you were out playing you could hear everybody chopping their onions and making their gravy and everybody making their own wine. Everybody helped each other."

The North Beach community Marie describes was one where folks got used to being outside. Growing up, a sunny day for her meant a trip to the park with her mother. "We used to sit in the plaza which is Washington Square, and all the ladies would just sit there." Understandably, as a young girl, Marie did not find these excursions particularly entertaining, so, she says, "I spent my youth going and watching weddings in church [Sts. Peter and Paul]. I'd go there and watch all the weddings while my mother was in the park talking."

Later, with children of her own, Marie rebelled against tradition.

"When I had my first child, I had a friend who said, 'Oh, I guess you go down to the plaza.' And I said 'I wouldn't go sit in the plaza . . . I won't go there.' And I never did sit in the plaza. I used to walk down to Market Street and back with the buggy to go out. You know, it didn't harm me, but it was just not what other people did."

In other ways, however, Marie was very much a part of the communal life of the neighborhood. "When my children were growing up, there was a lady who lived across the street and every day we would be outside. We would come outside around ten in the morning and go back to the house about 12:00 and put the children down for naps, but I never went to her home. You know how people say that they go over and have coffee. We never, ever did; we would just meet outside. And to this day, she lives next door now, I still don't go in her house."

The North Beach of an earlier day was so much a street culture that one had to plan if she wished to avoid chit chat with her neighbors. "Say some days you are in a hurry and you don't want to meet someone. There were short cuts you could take. You'd go down Jasper Alley, so you're eliminating Stockton Street and you're going to get to Green faster."

But Marie says the street life she used to enjoy—or avoid—isn't what it used to be. For one thing, most of the children are gone. "I find that whenever people have children, as soon as the kids are 2 or 3 years old, they have to go where there's a yard. You know, their thinking is that they've got to have all this space. It's just a different way of thinking. Garfield School is still here, but the children are all bussed in. I remember when they used to have their Halloween parades and they'd walk up and down the street. You still see children, but you don't see them running around the streets. You see more dogs."

Marie also believes another reason that the sense of community may be fading is there is no longer a shopping area of the kind she once knew. "Now, you can't even buy a spool of thread," she says. "When we were little, there

continued next page

Marie Harrington Remembers *continued from previous page*

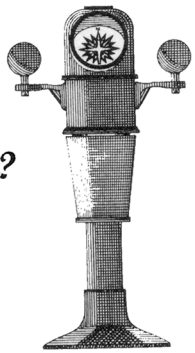
were at least five drugstores, four or five pastry stores, maybe five bakeries where they made French bread. And there were dress shops. There were two or three markets. Rossi's Market was huge in those days and then there was the Buon Gusto Market on Columbus and Green. And there were ice cream parlors—the Athens where Rose Pistola is now and Splendid's on Stockton Street where they made their own candy. And Tassano's Dry Goods at Grant and Union where we went to buy work clothes and sheets and crocheting material, and. later, school uniforms. Nowadays, for a lot of these things, you have go elsewhere."

Despite these changes, North Beach is where Marie wants to be. "I think that children in suburbs don't know their neighbors," she says. "I have a daughter who lives in Santa Rosa. She's waiting. Her son has three more years of school and then she says, 'I'm coming back.'"

EDITOR'S NOTE: *THD members may contact Audrey Tomaselli at 391-1792 to borrow the entire transcript of the interview with Marie Harrington as well as transcripts of interviews with Joe Jachetta, Art Hanna, Dante Benedetti, Peter Macchiarini and several other long time residents of our neighborhood. These transcripts are also available at the North Beach branch of the San Francisco Public Library and at the Bancroft Library, UC Berkeley.*

SHEILA TOBIN BLACK, Ph.D.

Licensed Clinical Psychologist #PSY 15926,
Specializing in Adults with Heavy "Baggage"



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A Flowering Branch: THE NORTH BEACH BRANCH OF THE SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

By Catherine Cormier

In the early months of 1996, my daughter Josephine and I went for the first time to Lapsit, a story time designed for children ages 3 and younger, at the North Beach Branch of the Public Library. At the time, the group was so small that there was a circle of chairs in the cozy children's area. I recall Josephine, a mere 3 months old at the time, was scared by the roar of the lion, as brought to life by the children's librarian, Jensa Woo.

We went back every week, as Josephine, our community of families, and Lapsit grew to expand to the space in the upper level of the library. After story time, on sunny days, babies and parents would congregate at the North Beach Playground. On rainy days, we'd stroll over to baby-friendly cafes such as Caffe Roma or Caffe Sappore, and we parents would talk about the joys (mostly!) of raising babies in North Beach. By the time Josephine was one year old, the popularity of Lapsit had grown so much that there were 2 sessions offered weekly.

Although the "babies" from Josephine's original Lapsit group are now kindergarteners, children's programs continue to thrive at the North Beach Branch. Children's librarian Jensa Woo and Jodie Mercier lead a variety of activities every month for preschool and school-aged children. Lapsit, for children ages 3 and under, takes place each Thursday (except for the third Thursday) at 10:15 a.m. and 11:45 a.m. Storytime, for children ages 3 to 5, takes place each Thursday (except for the third Thursday) at 11:00 a.m. On the third Thursday of each month, there are films—short subjects, often based on books available at the library.

If you are a new parent and live in the neighborhood, go and check out a Lapsit one Thursday morning. It is a great way to meet other new parents. Jensa and Jodie have great recommendations for books for your babies and for you!

North Beach Branch

2200 Mason (at Columbus Avenue & Greenwich Street)

Telephone 274-0270

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Cold Noses, Warm Hearts

Notes on the Feathered, Furred, and Scaled Residents of Telegraph Hill

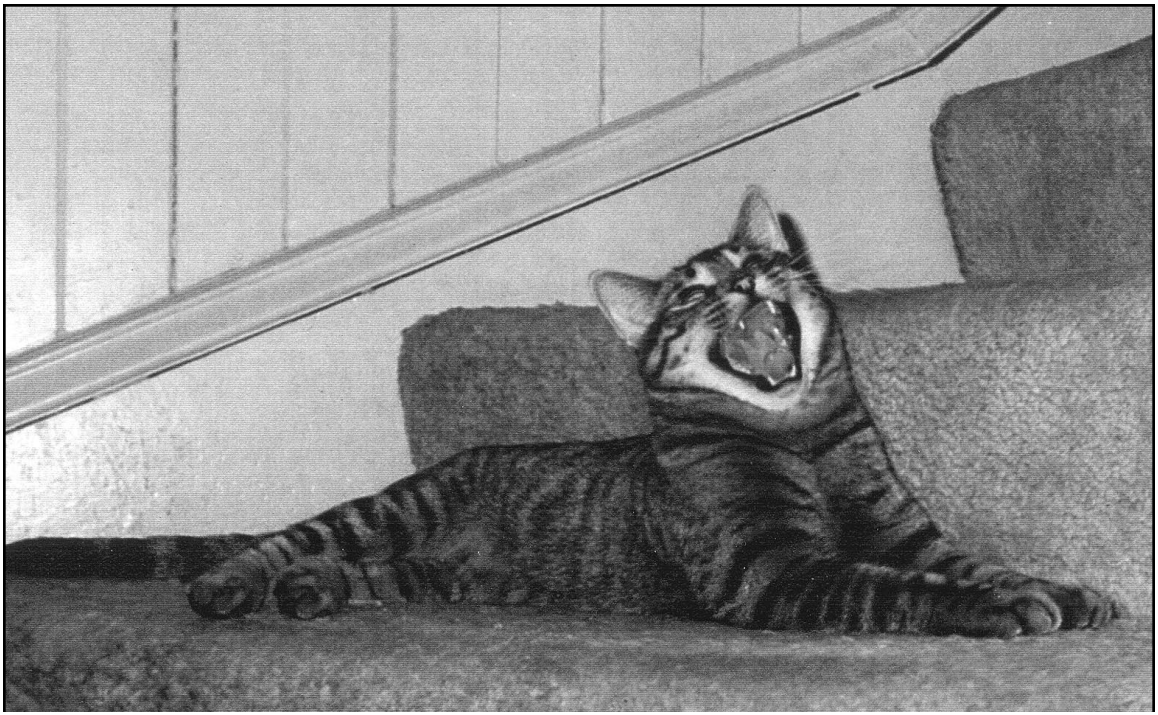
By Cheryl Bentley

Gentle Guard

Jack's face sags in folds around eyes that understand every woe ever befallen you. Such a face melts hearts. Indeed, Kathleen Dooley, the 7-year-old white boxer's guardian, says that Jack goes home at night with lipstick on his forehead, from kisses he gets at Columbine, Kathleen's Grant Avenue shop.

Jack's main duty, greeting visitors, is done with an air of sleepy innocence, while reclining in his basket, the tip of his tongue showing between his lips. His other role would surprise his many fans; Jack's the dog the police advised Kathleen to keep, to protect the shop. Sure enough, with an animal's unerring sense, Jack has barked and growled at unsavory characters who tried to

Jack smiles for the camera with Kathleen Dooley at his side.



Waiting for Eddie is such a giggle.

enter. "He always knows who shouldn't be here," says Kathleen.

Window Dressing

Jack is joined at Columbine by Choo Choo, a grey and white cat Kathleen inherited from Ron, of Figoni Hardware, when he could no longer keep her. Ron visited his friend daily, dressed in his Figoni smock.

The long-haired Choo-Choo spends much of her time in Columbine's windows, where more friends stop by to see her. She's the live one, among the taxidermied critters on display. Kathleen says she often discovers details of Choo Choo's "after-hours relationships."

Bring a Letter for Me

Letter carrier Eddie Andersen, of the U.S. Postal Service, was glad to meet June Osterberg, not because she was the woman to whom he had been delivering mail, but because she was the human being of Snuffy, the cat. Snuffy, then age 3, and Eddie had already developed what June calls "a friendship through the mail slot."

Now age 13, the silver tabby continues to wait for his friend's daily visit at the door. As for Eddie, his heart still belongs to Snuffy.

I am interested in starting a group in January to practice telepathic communication with animals, based on the methods of Penelope Smith. According to Smith, humans are the only species which does not regularly communicate telepathically, but learning to do so is not that difficult. We will meet for about an hour a week at the Puccini and use one another's animals as practice. Call Cheryl, 392-4081, if interested.

THD Board Resolutions

AUGUST: No resolutions.

SEPTEMBER: No resolutions.

OCTOBER: The Board endorsed the City CarShare program and supported its efforts.

The Board also agreed to support the revised plans for 20 Alta Street only at such time as agreement is reached between the developer and the designated subcommittee of THD on the following: (1) the form of a legally enforceable perpetual Conservation Easement that both limits the size and nature of all development on the site and protects the Grace Marchant Garden and the public's access to it; and (2) a satisfactory way to officially "decertify" the final Environmental Impact Report.

The Board also agreed that an amendment to THD's Bylaws, changing THD's boundaries to include the residents and property owners on both sides of the streets which currently form THD's boundaries, be submitted to a vote of the members of THD at the next regular meeting of the general membership.

THD Welcomes New Members

New THD Members, August-October 2000

Faye Bernstein, Victoria Doggett & John Blount, Mary Brant, Richhard Pennington & Inci Caner, Maurice Cococcia, Jim Dreyer, Maile & James Giaquinto, Jim Fisher & Eric Guerin, Madeleine Kane, Diana Kayiatos, Marvin & Barbara Kasoff, Kimberly Goosherst & Sherbin Kheradpur, Thomas King, Joe McDonald, Rosanne Vidaver & Herb Matthews, Jennifer Montgomery & John Nelson, Joel & Mindy Schweitzer, Robert & Nina Strauss, Judy St. John Taylor, Michael Alexander & Dianna Waggoner, Mark & Diane Whiting

For a Voice in Your Neighborhood Join Telegraph Hill Dwellers.

NEW MEMBER INFORMATION

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THD COMMITTEES NEED YOU

You can make a difference! Join one of THD's committees, meet and work with your fellow Hill Dwellers to improve life on the Hill.

STANDING COMMITTEES

Parking and Transportation. Chair, Howard Wong, 982-5055. Promotes efforts to ease congestion, optimize white zones, upgrade public transportation. Works with Department of Parking and Traffic.

Planning and Zoning. Chair Nancy Shanahan, 986-7094. Monitors and reviews proposed development projects for consistency with applicable City ordinances. Works with Planning Department staff and represents THD before the Landmarks Board, Planning Commission, Zoning Administrator and other regulating bodies to protect historic resources and maintain neighborhood character. Assists members to learn more about and participate in planning and zoning issues.

***Semaphore*.** Editor Cheryl Bentley, 392-4081. The editor and staff produce a quarterly magazine for THD members.

Program. Chair Pat Swan, 788-7926. Arranges social events, including quarterly membership meetings and get-acquainted social functions.

Budget. Maya Armour, 986-1474. As prescribed in bylaws for Treasurer.

Membership. Chair Rozell Overmire, 989-3945. As prescribed in bylaws for Financial Secretary.

SPECIAL COMMITTEES AND PROJECTS

Parks and Trees. Chair Julie Christensen, 552-7774. email julie@surfaces.com. Information and projects concerning local parks, green spaces and street trees.

Neighborhood Beautification Jan Holloway, 398-2055. Creates opportunities to improve, beautify, and preserve the Hill. Through its awards program, recognizes individuals and businesses who enhance our neighborhood. Facilitates cleanup, gardening and graffiti removal.

Oral History Project Chair Audrey Tomaselli, 391-1792. Taped interviews provide historical documentation of living and working in the neighborhood.

Pioneer Park Improvement Project. Chair Howard Wong, 982-5055. Work party volunteers enhance the open space around Coit Tower, improving accessibility and safety through planning, landscaping work parties and fundraising.

THD Web Page. Webmaster Peter Overmire, 989-3945. Shared information about meetings, local concerns and events.

LIAISONS WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Coalition for San Francisco Neighborhoods. Representative Gerry Crowley, 781-4201. Citywide organization interacts with other neighborhoods to discuss common problems.

N.E.R.T. June Fraps, 392-1187. Energizes members to take emergency disaster response training program sponsored by the City.

WEB SITE = www.thd.org

That's Us! Pete Overmire (989-3945), a longtime THDer and former officer has set up this site for Telegraph Hill Dwellers. Access it to see the sensational look he has created, impressive to local and international browsers alike. Lend him photographs and graphics relevant to the Hill that he can scan in. Call or e-mail information about upcoming meetings in the neighborhood and at City agencies, and ideas and concerns you want the rest of us to know about between Semaphores.

KAYE WOODS

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THD CALENDAR

2nd Saturday Stair & Garden Work Parties, December 9, January 13, February 10, March 10. Meet at Pioneer Park. For more information call 552-7774.

Annual Christmas Party, Sunday, December 3, Julius Castle, 2:00 – 4:00 PM.

Reception, Museo Italo Americano, Early January, Fort Mason. Date and time to be announced

February Membership Meeting, Pot Luck Dinner. Time and Location to be announced.

Schedules of Committee Meetings

PLANNING & ZONING: Last Wednesdays. Call for time and location. 986-7070.

PARKING & TRANSPORTATION: 2nd Saturdays at 11 AM at Little City Restaurant, Union and Powell Streets.

For more information, log on to http://www.thd.org